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REVIEWS AND NEW BOOKS

General Works, Theory and Its History

The Social Basis of Religion. By SIMON N. PATTEN. (New York: Macmillan Company. 1911. Pp. 247. \$1.25.)

This interesting book states in the language of the economist the essential characteristics of some of the deeper currents of popular Christian thought, particularly Protestant thought. It has little in common with the more technical and specialized theological thought. Religion is identified not with morality nor with systems of belief, but with the social reaction against degeneration and vice. Degeneration is described as objective and economic, whereas regeneration is psychical and personal.

The Christian plan of salvation is of course not merely salvation from a state of future torment, but salvation from the degeneration and vice which make for social disintegration, the weakness of the social organism, the decay and death of national civilization. On pages 4 and 5 the author attempts a restatement of the plan of salvation so as to emphasize its modern aspects. "Its essential doctrines expressed in social instead of theological terms" are, he says:

- "1. The doctrine of one supreme God.
- "2. The doctrine of the fall of man, or of social degeneration.
- "3. The doctrine of regeneration, or the reincorporation of social outcasts into society, in contrast with the doctrine of elimination.
- "4. The doctrine of a personal uplift through contact, influence and suggestion, in contrast with the doctrine of evolution through biologic variation.
- "5. The doctrine of progress through peace and love, in contrast with progress through conflict.
- "6. The doctrine of the Messiah, or of lofty inspiring leadership, in contrast with the material concept of civilization.
- "7. The doctrine of service, in contrast with self-centered aggression.
- "8. The doctrine of social responsibility, in contrast with individual rights.
- "9. The doctrine of personal responsibility, in contrast with fatalism or external domination.
- "10. The doctrine that the wages of sin are death."

The first of these doctrines has no more to do with economic than with any other field of thought. The doctrine of the fall of man the author interprets as a moral and physical fall when the man of the historical epoch is compared with the preceding ages,

the author's opinion being that man at the beginning of the historical epoch was vastly inferior physically, socially, and morally to what he had been in some previous epoch. This position is likely to strike a good many readers as of doubtful historical validity, even if it is not regarded as extremely whimsical. It seems to the reviewer to be somewhat less satisfactory than the old Miltonic doctrine restated in terms of economics. The inherent antagonism between human wants, resulting in scarcity and giving rise to our whole economic life, would seem to be a sufficient explanation of the doctrine of the fall. The gratification, for example, of the sexual instinct, making for increase of population, together with the desire for food, which under the law of diminishing returns becomes more and more difficult of gratification as population increases in a given territory, produces an inevitable antagonism of interests, not only within the individual but among different individuals. It is this antagonism of interests which calls for economy on the one hand, and which produces practically all forms of social hostility on the other. The allegorical story of a garden in which every want could be freely satisfied, where there was no such thing as scarcity, satisfactorily explains this situation, provided we do not give a literal historical interpretation to the story, and understand that it is poetical and allegorical.

The doctrine of regeneration set forth by the author is the current evangelical doctrine, and is set over against the evolutionary doctrine. It is the revivifying, through moral and religious appeal, of the dormant social impulses of the socially unadapted, rather than the elimination of the unadapted through the process of natural selection. In contrast with this evangelical doctrine may be placed that of Herbert Spencer, who sums up his theory in the closing lines of the third volume of his *Principles of Sociology*, as follows: "The ultimate man will be one whose private requirements coincide with public ones. He will be that manner of man who, in spontaneously fulfilling his own nature, incidentally performs the functions of a social unit; and yet is only enabled so to fulfill his own nature by all others doing the like." This result, however, as he has labored to show, is to come about not simply through evangelical appeal, but through elimination of those individuals who do not conform to the type which he pictures in his description of the "ultimate man."

It is more than doubtful whether the present popular trend of religious belief is any more in harmony with the teaching of

Christ himself than it is with the teaching of evolutionary science. One of the things which He emphasized as strongly as He emphasized anything was that He came not to send peace but a sword, separating father from son, brother from brother. But instead of dividing mankind along conventional lines of race, color, caste, profession, or occupation, He was to divide them on strictly moral lines into the good and the bad, that is, the socially adapted and the socially unadapted, they whose conduct conformed to the requirements of social living and they whose conduct did not conform. From the standpoint of the truest altruist, it is of vastly greater service to the world to help those who will in turn help the world than it is to help those who will continue to be a burden upon or a menace to the social life of the world. This construction, however, lies far beyond the view of the average altruistic religious worker of today, yet it was well within the view of the teacher whom these short-sighted followers are professing to serve. And this far-sighted view is much more in harmony with the Spencerian doctrine than it is with the doctrine set forth as scientific in the book which is now before us.

If there were room to follow up this theme, the reviewer believes that he could show that this fundamental difficulty vitiates a great deal that follows in the author's discussion. It is not sacrilege nor irreligion, but red-hot religion, to urge that the development of a sound religion, supporting a sound system of morality, is as much a factor in the struggle for existence and the survival of human types as the development of any of the physical characteristics which the biologists have explained at such length as affecting the survival and adaptation of any of the animal types. That group, that nationality, or that race which develops a religion and a system of morality which economize human energy in the highest degree, which direct that energy in the most intelligent and productive manner, will survive and dominate the earth to the exclusion of those social groups, nationalities, or races which waste their energy or direct it unintelligently or unproductively.

In his chapter on the "Social Mission of the Church," the author repeats his fundamental proposition that progress by elimination and progress through redemption are opposing concepts, one of which must be proved wrong by the trend of evidence. To the reviewer it seems that though these may possibly be considered as opposing concepts, they are not opposing but supplementary processes. Progress through redemption is of course a real thing.

They who have formerly loved evil and shunned good, they who have wasted their energy in vice, must be taught to love good and shun evil, that is, to economize and apply their energy to socially productive purposes. But they who will not be redeemed, or who cannot be reached by evangelical appeal, who reject the call to the productive life, must be eliminated by the slow but sure process of economic competition. If they are preserved in spite of their unproductiveness, the doom which should be visited upon them will surely be visited upon the social group, the nation, or the race whose system of morality, or whose religion, exercises itself to keep them alive, or to protect them against the normal results of competition. If this rejection of the call to the productive life does not constitute the sin against the Holy Spirit, it certainly produces exactly the same result, for there is no salvation from this sin.

In this most interesting and important chapter 14 on the "Social Mission of the Church," the author presents a novel view in favor of the missionary zeal of the Protestant churches which is certainly original and startling. For example, "Prosperity checks the birth rate and promotes race suicide to such a degree that if new races cannot be raised to take the places of those dying out, there will be a decline in civilization to the level existing before the rise of Christianity. All of the earlier missionary efforts will be in vain unless methods are devised to arouse new classes, races, and nations with the same success with which our ancestors were awakened in earlier epochs by the prevailing forms of religious propagation." But along with the inspiration to zealous missionary effort which comes from the reading of such words as these, there creeps in a number of very serious questions. Because Christianity teaches a higher form of morality, and therefore secures a wiser conservation of human energy, prosperity inevitably follows in its train. But if this prosperity results in the destruction of the race, where is the profit? Or what is the use of carrying Christianity to these new races if in the end it results in burning out their vitality and leaving them where they were before? Would it not be better and more profitable in the end to see whether our religion may not meet this new test of prosperity and give its people a discipline which will enable them to stand prosperity; which will hold them true to the ideals of the family builder in spite of their prosperity; which, in other words, will counteract the tendency toward race suicide, and enable the Christianized nation to stand the prosperity

which Christianity brings? To doubt that Christianity is capable of accomplishing this end seems to the reviewer to lack a real constructive faith in Christianity itself. But he is well aware that no Christian sect has yet met that test successfully; and the larger and more influential the sect, the less successfully has it met it. As a matter of fact, the Christian church in the past has appealed primarily to the poor, and it has given to the poor an admirable discipline to meet their conditions of life. And in giving them this discipline it has enabled them, particularly in Protestant countries, to rise out of their conditions. But it has not succeeded in giving the new discipline which is necessary to hold the people true to their traditions after they have outgrown the condition in which the church found them. Here is a social mission of the church, or a social aspect of religion, which deserves the consideration not only of the religionist but of the economist as well.

The reviewer has felt called upon to state some of these fundamental objections to the point of view of the author. They are stated, however, not in any sense by way of disparagement, but by way of suggestion for further study of this most important topic. It is the reviewer's opinion that no book of recent times has discussed more fundamental problems, or discussed them more satisfactorily or intelligently, than the book now before us; but because of the magnitude of the subject, and the complexity of the problems involved, there is room for wide divergence of opinion, and there is need of intense study and prolonged discussion, in order that sound conclusions may ultimately be reached.

T. N. CARVER.

Harvard University.

David Ricardo: A Centenary Estimate. By JACOB H. HOLLANDER, Ph. D. Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science: Series XXVIII, No. 4. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press. 1910. Pp. 137.)

Professor Hollander's *David Ricardo: A Centenary Estimate* consists of three lectures, delivered at Harvard University in the spring of 1910, to mark the centenary anniversary of the appearance of Ricardo's first important publication, *The High Price of Bullion, a Proof of the Depreciation of Bank Notes*. To those of us who believe that the history of economic thought in the nineteenth century contains other lessons than that of the fallibility of the human intellect, the work done by Professor Hollander